

REMARKS

Further to the Decision on Appeal mailed January 20, 2010, Applicants submit the foregoing amendments, along with a Request for Continued Examination. In this communication, claims 1 and 11 are amended. No new matter has been added. Therefore, claims 1, 3-11, and 13-20 remain pending. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the claims place them in condition for allowance, and request that the rejections of these claims be withdrawn.

The Decision on Appeal affirmed the rejection of claims 1, 3-8, 10-11, 13-18, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over EP Patent No. 0853402 to Yoshino et al. ("Yoshino") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,764,930 to Staats ("Staats"). The Decision further affirmed the rejection of claims 9 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshino in view of Staats and in further view of U.S. Patent No. 6,507,953 to Horlander ("Horlander").

Particularly, with respect to the central issue of the appeal regarding the Examiner's equation of Staats' node reference identifier with the "unique node identification numbers" recited in claims 1 and 11, the Decision explained that the system of Staats does in some way maintain a record of the node reference identifier after bus reset, and therefore may be interpreted to meet the limitations of claims 1 and 11. *1/20/10 Decision on Appeal*, p.6. The Decision further explained that while the device of Staats does not maintain a record of a device after bus reset, such requirement was not clearly recited in the claims of the present application.

Accordingly, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 11 to clarify that the register maintains a record of the device regardless of whether the device remains connected. For example, claim 1 has been amended to recite:

"for each of said selected devices, said register storing a record of said selected device and said unique node identification number allocated to said selected device, and maintaining said record regardless of whether said selected device remains connected to said digital interface." (Emphasis added.)

Support for this amendment may be found throughout the specification. See, e.g., Specification p.17, ll.15-24; p.23, ll.17-23.

As acknowledged by the Board, Staats fails to teach such limitations. Neither Yoshino nor Horlander cure this defect of Staats. For at least this reason, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claims 1 and 11 are patentable, and request that their rejections be withdrawn. Additionally, at least because claims 3-10 and 13-20 depend from and therefore include the limitations of claims 1 and 11, respectively, Applicants further submit that claims 3-10 and 13-20 are also patentable and request that their rejections also be withdrawn.

As it is believed that all of the rejections set forth in the Official Action have been fully met, favorable reconsideration and allowance are earnestly solicited.

If, however, for any reason the Examiner does not believe that such action can be taken at this time, it is respectfully requested that he/she telephone applicant's attorney at (908) 654-5000 in order to overcome any additional objections which he might have.

If there are any additional charges in connection with this requested amendment, the Examiner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 12-1095 therefor.

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Respectfully submitted,
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